We're gonna rattle this ghost town

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We're gonna rattle this ghost town

by lillaseptember

Summary

"I'm a mess," Will muttered as he frowned down at his own disarray, his paint soiled shirt and hands that were still tainted with oil, the blush he was incapable of fighting down rising in his cheeks again.

"You're beautiful," was all Hannibal said before Will looked up into those solid amber eyes again, a tenderness in them that made his knees weak, and as his breath hitched in his throat and his heart skipped a beat in his chest, he knew that his life would never be the same ever again.

And Hannibal caressed his cheek gently just as the sun set over the treetops.

In which Hannibal Lecter crash lands in a sleepy small town for a summer, and turns Will Graham's life upside down.

Notes

Inspired by *Anna Sun* by Walk the Moon. Basically, I got stuck on the "your shoulder in my mouth" line, and then this whole hipster murder monster unfolded.

I was up against the wall on the west mezzanine

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Wolf Trap was a lot like any other small town in many ways.

The river based industry that had flourished in the beginning of last century had slowly gone extinct by the turn of the new millennium. The economic crises had hit hard, and along with the steady decline of the population, the employment numbers had also dropped. The town was bitter and nostalgic, but tried its best not to show it. To the outside world, it was a cheerful little town, eager to adjust to the order of the brave, new world, despite lacking both the resources and knowledge of how to.

But it got along decently. It tried at least, and that deserves some kind of credit. And despite its bitter streaks, it was still devoted, with a close-knit community with dear and long held traditions, and they looked out for their own.

“Family friendly” was what they called it. A sleepy small town in the middle of nowhere, where nothing much ever truly happened. A peaceful little island in the middle of a world of raging chaos. A sequestered place to retreat to if you wanted nothing more than to just exist.

But the town's unperturbed tranquility had been violently shaken upside down over the course of one single summer.

It had all started innocently enough, one gentle evening just on the verge of summertime.

Alana and Margot had, quite firmly, dragged Will along to the Summer Summoning, nagging on and on about him needing a "social life" and "to get laid". He had allowed them to shove him into the back of his own pickup truck, stealing his keys and hauling him into the middle of the woods outside of town, if only just to get them off his back.

The Summer Summoning was an annual festivity among Wolf Trap's youth, a party deep in the needleleaf forest in early June, with the intent of evoking the first soft summer spirits. With the sun gentle in the sky, there had been music and booze, girl in short jean shorts and boys in tattered shirts, laughter and dancing and a vibrant anticipation in the air. School was over for the year and summer was on the brink of blooming and worries seemed so very far away.

Will, never having been a very social creature, had stood on the edge of the grove they had cleared in the shrubbery for the occasion, solo cup in hand, content in just watching his friends and peers enjoying themselves, trying not to drown in the deafening blaring of the music and the pummeling waves of euphoria. Jack had won the beer chugging competition, and had been carried around the grove in celebration. Margot had danced until her feet bled, and Alana had kissed her softly. Bella had walked up to Will with a small paint container in

hand, adorning his face with lilac finger paint without a word of explanation but with a serene smile, and then she had danced away as nimbly as a fairy walking on fog.

They had all tried to pull him into the festivities countless of times, Margot with a pout, Alana with a roll of her eyes and Jack with a heady smack to his back. But Will had stayed rooted by his place at the edge of the grove, ever as content to simply be observing rather than participating. The evening had been far from lonely though, as people passed him every other minute, to either just pass fleeting pleasantries, or to have long and heartfelt discussion, either because they genuinely appreciated Will's opinion, or just in drunken stupor.

And Will found that he was enjoying himself more than he had ever hoped for the longer the celebration proceeded.

But it was as Alana had finally convinced Margot to take a break in her dancing mania that the evening had taken that world tilting turn.

"Who's that?" Will asked over the pounding drums and unrestrained shouts of freedom as he nodded in the direction of the person in question.

The young man had also been the victim of, or maybe been blessed by, Bella's face painting, black dots trailing from his forehead along his nose down to his chin. Caramel colored hair was slicked back to expose solid, amber eyes, which were situated over defined cheekbones. He wore a bow tie and suspenders over a neatly pressed dress shirt, and even if you ignored his extraneous attire, he still held an air of not being from around town. But he smiled courteously as he seemed to actually listen to Freddie's incessant rambling.

"Hannibal Lecter," Margot immediately declared, symmetrical red dots aligning her petite face, matching her just as blood red lips, her pigtail braids bouncing with her still as excited though sore steps. Following Will's line of vision, to where it were resting on the handsome foreigner, her brow suddenly quirked suggestively. "His parents are some crazy rich Lithuanian authors. He's here visiting for the summer."

"I've heard he's very sweet," Alana said as she offered one of her gentle smiles. She had a much more subtle face paint, just a few cerulean dots along her right cheekbone, setting off her eyes. But she had a jumble of both feathers and flowers woven into her curly and unruly mane, almost as spirited as the soul behind her irises.

"And equipped as hell, I mean look at that package."

Before Will could stop himself, his eyes had wandered down to where this asserted package was resting. But instantly horrified at his own impudence, he tore his eyes away from Hannibal altogether, trying to focus on Gideon throwing up on the other side of the grove instead, attempting to fight down the blush that threatened to rise to his cheeks, but feeling himself loosing the battle. But just before he was about to admit defeat, he was thankfully saved by the sound of Alana playfully slapping Margot across the shoulder.

"Hey, *I'm* the bisexual in this relationship!"

"Well, I'm not thinking of *my* benefit," Margot slurred with a pointed look in Will's direction, wobbling slightly on her wounded feet, quite obviously too intoxicated for her own good.

"Oh my god," was all he managed to mumble into his plastic cup as he finally surrendered the battle, wanting nothing more than to sink through the moss below his feet.

"Yeah, right, I think we're getting you sobered up," Alana as she tried to fight down an amused grin while draping an arm across her stumbling drunk girlfriend's shoulders. She at least had the benignity to offer Will an apologetic look before starting leading her away, but he just waved them off, wanting nothing more than to regain his footing and fight down the burning flush on his face.

"But I want to *daaaaaaaance!*"

"Your feet are *literally* bleeding..."

Watching Alana half guide, half carry Margot off to a more secluded part of the forest, Margot peppering soft kisses along her face and shoulders, Will released a deep exhale and pulled fingers that were still grimy after having spent the whole morning tinkering with one of dad's old boat motors through his messy curls. Downing what little was left in his cup, he saw Jack picking up one of Bella's paint cans, the low set sun glinting off the tin container as he held it high above his head, Bella laughing and gathering up her delicate skirts as she set about chasing after him. Will smiled at them, but glancing down at the empty contents of the red plastic, and feeling like his nerves needed a refill, he set about crossing the grove.

But just as Will had started winding through the crowd, ducking to avoid sharp and thoughtless elbows and just evading one or two unintentional headbutts, he noticed how Jack suddenly tripped over a traitorous root sticking up through the moss. He managed to keep his balance long enough to stay upright, but the tin can he had held above his head had tipped upside down, its contents splashing out all in one go behind him.

Down onto where one Frederick Chilton had just happened to be standing.

An uncanny silence suddenly filled the grove then, no one failing to notice how Frederick was suddenly drenched in turquoise finger paint from top to toe. Frederick had just stood frozen for a good few moments, an incredulous look on his face as a palpable suspense had settled over them all. But then he had, with a swiftness Will wouldn't have accredited him with beforehand, grabbed a fistful of neon pink paint from Bella's innocent hands and smeared it all over Jack's face.

And a full blown paint war had flared up within a matter of seconds, set to the jovial beating of drums, bright shouts and ecstatic laughter.

Will did his best to weave his way through the many merry paint militants, but getting both splattered and smeared in the process. Twisting out of Beverly's sticky hands with a polite enough smile, he happily stumbled out of the messy battalion into the other side of the grove, breathing a heavy sigh of relief before staggering into yet another paint stained embrace.

Because by some ridiculous interference of fate or mischance, he had ended up right next to the Lithuanian with sharp cheekbones and unyielding eyes.

"Is your warfare going well?" Hannibal asked with a small quirk in the left corner of his mouth, a soft glow in his eyes that were just as steady as the hands that helped Will find his footing again. There was paint all over his white slacks, a jumble of color all melding into one another, shaping into a chaotic rainbow. His bow tie was slightly loosened, his hair a little rumpled, but he was as steadfast as ever in his collectiveness as he inspected Will.

"I'm a mess," Will muttered as he frowned down at his own disarray, his paint soiled shirt and hands that were still tainted with oil, the blush he was incapable of fighting down rising in his cheeks again.

"You're beautiful," was all Hannibal said before Will looked up into those solid amber eyes again, a tenderness flashing through them that made his knees weak, and as his breath hitched in his throat and his heart skipped a beat in his chest, he knew that his life would never be the same ever again.

And Hannibal caressed his cheek gently just as the sun set over the treetops.

He was pressed up against a cold concrete wall.

The old industrial complex was tucked away deep in the woods, close to the riverside. The logging industry had been virtually the sole pillar in Wolf Trap's economy decades ago, but so came the digital revolution, and it had slowly been phased out and eventually abandoned altogether, the old sawmill along with it.

The two story building was a hallow old thing, filled with space and echoes. The iron pillars were rusting and wilting, much like the town's current economy, and the grunge covered floorboards creaked and whimpered under their feet. The rafters were rotting above them and the last traces of the sun filtered through broken windows.

Hannibal's mouth was working at a sweet spot at the base of Will's neck, while Will's fingers were grasping at his hips, desperate to bring him closer, closer, closer still.

It had started quite innocuous and lazy, cautious fingers tentatively working their way around solid biceps and soft curls, their lips sliding across each other slowly and respectfully. But even the most gentlest of touches and softest of exhales had set Will's nerves on fire, and when a gentle tug at Hannibal's lower lip had produced the most delicate of gasps, Will's eyes flicked up to his. And Hannibal's eyes had burned with the same ferocity as his fingers digging into Will's skin.

And within an instant, their fingers had turned fervent, tugging, pulling, *demanding*, and their kisses all but devouring. Hannibal's suspenders were soon hanging by his sides and Will's flannel shirt was torn open, their bare skin contact not nearly close enough as Hannibal's breath trembled in his ears.

His nimble fingers were eagerly tugging at Will's belt, his shirt getting stuck in the rough concrete behind him, as a wild curiosity had overcome him, Will experimentally bit down on his exposed shoulder. Hannibal froze as he inhaled sharply, and then his nails dug a little more fiercely into Will's hips as he looked up into those burning amber eyes again.

"You are much too vibrant for a small town life," he said in between shallow pants, his chest heaving under Will's trembling hands, his lips reddened and ripened.

"Well," Will said before he licked his lips, Hannibal's pupils dilating just discernibly. "Why don't you take me away from here?"

And then time came to a halt between them.

Will would have slapped himself if he had been in any other situation. They had both picked up on the unintentional implication in Will's words, and Hannibal's eyes fluttered shut for a moment. Will panted softly as his fingers twisted deeper into Hannibal's flushed skin and he tried not to curse himself.

That had not been the time nor place.

Because summer would come to an end eventually, and Hannibal wasn't from around town.

But they were still young, fall was so far away and Hannibal's eyes held a silent promise as they flicked up to Will's again. And his lips tasted of something savage as he kissed him again.

Hannibal took the time to button his shirt again, the rumpled fabric covering the deft bite mark Will had left on his shoulder, while Will just bothered to shrug on his ruined one. They forced opened the whittled and rusted door that led out onto the frail old tin roof that looked out over the forest and carefully climbed out onto it. Hannibal inhaled deeply as he tilted his head to inspect faint stars that was slowly starting to scatter across the iris sky, and Will watched him.

Some part of him felt like he should feel some twinge of bashfulness, some trace of embarrassment. But seeing how they had stumbled upon Alana and Margot in a far more exposed position on their way to the mill, Will couldn't help but to feel righteous. He had had to put up with those two for far too long.

He had deserved this.

And it was in the soft twilight the first fireworks suddenly lit up the heavens.

"How beautiful," Hannibal murmured as Will walked up to him, a peaceful smile resting on his ample lips as his eyes followed the colorful explosions, and Will couldn't help the small smirk that tugged at his own lips.

"I figured you didn't like small towns."

"It has its charms."

Hannibal grinned suddenly and wickedly then, and Will was helpless to suppress the laugh that escaped from him, still lightheaded and tingling all over as he at least tried to fight down the stupid grin that had plastered itself onto his face.

"How about you," Hannibal asked, still not breaking away from the vivid spectacle above them. "Do you really want a big city life?"

"Oh, hell no," Will answered before he really had time to consider the question, and the implications it held. "I couldn't handle it."

Hannibal finally turned to look at him then, a thoughtful expression on his face.

Will hadn't lied. He wasn't a city person, the constant hustle and bustle *was* too much for him to handle. He had grown up in a secluded society where they were still trying to figure out how internet connection worked, and that had left its imprints on him. He was a simple person, really. But looking into Hannibal's steady eyes, he backtracked.

"But, I don't know. I want to do *something.* Not just be stuck here all my life. Wolf Trap can be quite... *Predictable*."

He considered Hannibal's appearance again, his previously scrupulously slicked back hair now a disheveled mess, his dress shirt crumpled, his cool and collected exterior now scattered with bruises and scratches.

He had been *far* from predictable.

And he just smiled slowly as he inspected Will.

“I feel like life still has a lot in store for you, Will Graham.”

He reached out for Will's hand, twining their fingers together, and Will hid his own timid smile in Hannibal's now clothed shoulder as they silently watched the fireworks together. And clasped Hannibal's hand tighter as an unusual warmth spread into his limbs.

One thing was for sure, though.

This was going to be one hell of an unpredictable summer.

Chapter End Notes

Oh Will, you don't even know half of what's in store for you.

This started as a one-shot... Until it grew out of my control and it wasn't anymore.

This is quite the train wreck, and I've tried to clear it up, but some things are simply too far gone to save. I'm still oddly in love with it though, so here goes nothing.

Yes, I am going to completely butcher Margot's character, but I needed *someone* to fill this role, and she seemed like the best choice. Plus, I'm having extremely much fun writing her like this.

But it physically pained me to write *that* scene. I don't understand sexual attraction, so excuse me for trying to come across like I do. I had to give it a shot at least.

And yes, this is cheesy and corny and absolutely ridiculous, but that was exactly what I was aiming for! So all's good.

Screen falling off the door, door hanging off the hinges

Chapter Notes

So quiet
A little house out in the woods
And it would feel so good
If you would stay, if you would stay
Summer is over
- Come under the covers, Walk the Moon

See the end of the chapter for more notes

They had somehow laid claim to the sawmill after that first night.

It was a ratty and shabby old thing, on the brink of falling in on itself, but it had its charms. Will had made a half-hearted attempt at strengthening the tilting beams while Hannibal had endeavored to furnish the sullied space, but they had both retreated to languidly watch the stars that spun above them through the broken windows, sore fingertips tracing flushed skin.

They spent their days wandering below delicate sunlight trickling through delicate crowns of leaves, florets blooming in their footsteps, tender touches spellbinding, adoring and heartdropping.

Their nights were spent on a tattered floral couch in the starlight, brazen fingers exploring, scratching, marking, Hannibal's fingernails soon leaving permanent indents on Will's hips and Will's teeth creating a familiar trail along Hannibal's neck.

Hannibal made Will laugh, and he made Hannibal relax, something he eventually confided didn't come easy to him. And the abandoned and rundown construction was filled with life and laughter once again as they slowly built a home together.

The occurrence of Will suddenly starting to spend his days walking hand in hand with another guy caused a lot less controversy than you'd might have expected.

Wolf Trap may have been resentful for a lot of things, but it wasn't bigoted.

But a few stinging confrontations were unavoidable, and Will quickly explained that the best way to counter them was to flip a finger and simply move on. Something that Hannibal, who had carried himself with nothing else than complete poise and composure beforehand, suddenly displayed a very surprisingly belligerent attitude, had a little hard time adjusting to.

Otherwise Hannibal fell into his place in Wolf Trap with surprising ease. He found a kindred spirit in Alana, and they would spend hours talking around a bottle of wine about everything in between life and death and the meaning of it all. The more unlikely kinship was the

friendship he and Margot found in each other, her crudeness a stark contrast to his refined grace, and them balancing each other out quite admirably.

They had never tried to define whatever it was they had going on. Had never even breached the subject apart from Will's unintentional nudging at it that first night. But Will found himself comforted by his ignorance, and as the summer nights idly slipped by, he tried not to think of time and space at all, pouring all of his focus into Hannibal's embrace.

It wasn't until the eve of the summer solstice that the next Wolf Trap social event rolled around.

Because of the success of the Summer Summoning, the sun shining almost every day since the ceremonial celebration, the same grove had been cleared in the woods to host this new festivity. Will had turned momentarily obstinate, much rather preferring an evening indoors than among his rowdy peers, but Hannibal had been resolute in his belief that some proper socializing would do him good, and with some soft kisses and searing promises, Will had caved in.

Will wasn't even entirely sure what they had all gathered for, and before he had even started to find his feet, an opening ritual had been announced, a contest to see who could fastest make their way from the top of the hill down to the river below. Terrified laughter and bright screams had quickly filled the forest as feet and limbs had tumbled through the tallgrass shrubbery, ecstatic shouts of victory coming from whoever cashed to the riverbank first in every round.

This time Will had jibbed even more unwaveringly, but had still found himself next to Hannibal on the starting line somehow.

But as soon as the starting shot had sounded, the competitive spirit had been ignited within him. And glancing at Hannibal, whose eyes had burned with the same determination to win, they had both leaped off of the ledge, feet skidding across the rocky foundation, elbows swatting into twigs and with a fierce resolve to not let the other win.

The last couple of feet just before the grassy hill met the sand banks of the river Will pulled ahead of Hannibal just enough for it to be perceptible, and a grin pulled on Will's face just as a victorious laughter was about to erupt from his chest. But just then, a strong set of arms encircled his waist with a momentum that threw him completely off balance as they both toppled over one another, rolling down the end of the hill in a bundle of limbs and curses and chuckles until they finally came to an abrupt halt just by the water's edge, Will's back smacking into the ground hard enough to knock all air out of his lungs.

Hannibal was a giggling mess above him, his fingers digging into Will's shirt as the mirthful laughter tumbled out of him, and he placed what he at least thought came across as rueful kisses along Will's neck as he tried to grumble sullenly, the back of his head throbbing uncomfortably. But the grin plastered on Hannibal's stupid face and the twigs caught in his perfect hair made it increasingly hard, and it was only Hannibal's lips on his own that eventually prevented laughter to spill through them.

“I believe that this is my victory,” Hannibal murmured against his lips as their contenders finally made it up to them to check if they were alright, and Will could only roll his eyes in response as Margot awarded them each with a flower crown

The rest of the night passed in a pleasant haze, Hannibal standing for most of Will’s socializing, Will practically just hanging by his shoulder and smiling whenever someone addressed him. He *would* much rather have stayed in that evening, but he was among friends, and as long as he didn’t have to leave Hannibal’s side he was alright.

Alana had set up a dancing schedule for Margot in order to avoid the woe of the Summer Summoning, and even though Margot whined whenever she was forced to sit down to get something to drink and rest her feet, she always shone twice as brightly whenever she was allowed to dance again. Alana glowed in the way only the lighthearted and carefree could, and Will was happy for her.

Both of their happiness had been a long time coming.

Frederick, who had apparently been the one arranging the party, had banned paint of any and all sorts, and Bella had been happy to oblige, bringing heaps and heaps of glitter instead. The small plastic particles filled the air, got stuck in all of their clothes and hair and glimmered in the midsummer sun. Frederick had moaned and groused flamboyantly, until Freddie had stalked over and grabbed him by the collar, the both of them disappearing somewhere deep into the woods and not returning until Frederick was nothing more than a sweating and glittering mess.

Will found himself enjoying being an observer even while being with Hannibal, who was such an active participant. They complemented each other well in that way. Hannibal made sure that Will didn’t revert into a complete hermit, and Will made sure that Hannibal kept his feet on the ground. And he enjoyed watching Hannibal charming his way into even the most wary of Will’s acquaintances, even Beverly eating straight out of his hand before the sun had set, his allure drawing them in as easy as bees to nectar.

But the whole night had gone south the moment Jack had walked up to them.

It had started out as just embarrassing, Jack ceremoniously shaking Hannibal’s hand while making some grand speech about “Will being a good man” and Jack hoping that Hannibal was respecting that, followed by an unspoken treat that hung heavy in the air between them. It took all of Will’s self-control to not strangle himself then and there, wanting nothing more than to sink through the forest floor. But Hannibal maneuvered it all with poise, of course, and just smiled brightly as he assured Jack that he was very well aware of what a great man Will was and that he did his outmost to prove himself worthy of Will’s grace.

And Will could have ravaged him on the spot.

But then Jack had delivered what was to be the beginning of the end.

“Hey, have you heard about the robberies, by the way?”

“What? No, *I* haven’t,” Margot chimed in as she walked over, adjusting Will’s flower crown in the process. She was never one to pass up on gossip, which made it quite a wonder that she hadn’t come across this information earlier.

“Well, there’s some kind of lunatic that’s been harassing local businesses for some weeks now,” Jack said with a grim expression. “He means business too. He maimed old Georgie, you know, he who owns the old hardware store on the outskirts of town?”

“Why’d he want to rob a hardware store?” Margot asked with a perplexed expression.

“And why in *Wolf Trap?*” Alana, as usual, asked the little more relevant question.

“That’s what dad’s been asking himself,” Jack said as he stared out into space with a thoughtful expression. His father was the county sheriff, something Jack was proud and loved reminding people of. But waiting for whatever point Jack wanted to make by bringing the subject up, they all fell into an uncomfortable silence.

“How very dreadful,” Hannibal finally contemplated, all of them seemingly shaking out of their reveries.

“Yeah, which is why I think we’ll drop it.” Seemingly finally realizing himself what a terrible idea it had been to bring it up in the first place, Jack’s lips twisted into a forced smile. “I’ll let you get on with your nights.”

Nodding curtly before turning abruptly on his heel and making his way across the grove, they were left standing in a stunned silence as they watched him.

“Well, I’m gonna need more alcohol to drown that bummer” Will mused as he looked down at the pitiful remains in his cup. He turned to kiss Hannibal briefly, Hannibal’s fingers still finding the time to rake at the bruised skin at Will’s hips, before he started his way over to the beer keg.

He had been stopped hallway through the grove by Georgia though, whom he hadn’t seen ever since school had ended, and she had insisted on catching up, congratulating him on his “hot Lithuanian” and demanding to know what he and Hannibal got up to during the days. Georgia ended up doing most of the talking though, seemingly having been up to endless of small adventures in the few weeks they had been apart, and when she finally allowed him to get on with his refreshment mission, he was unsure of what day it was.

And he had just filled his cup and started finding his footing again when someone bumped into him roughly from the side.

“Hi faggot.”

Will took a moment to suppress his seething rage, biting down the fell comeback that was resting at the very tip of his tongue, and forced himself to meet Dolarhyde’s leering grin with a taunt smile of his own.

“And you’re still a homophobe I see, Dolarhyde,” he said while offering yet another strained smile, but continued before Francis had the chance to speak again. “But oh wait, it’s a *gay-phobe* you are, right? Because I never see you complain whenever Alana and Margot make out.”

Francis was stunned speechless for a moment, his mouth gaping open as he inspected Will. But then he seemed to collect himself as he grinned down at him boisterously again.

“Hey, I’m just messing with ya kid,” he said as he slung an arm across Will’s shoulders, rattling him so thoroughly that most of his beer spilled out of his cup again. “‘Love is equal’, and all that jazz. I’m sure you and Hannibal will live a long and merry life together, loving each other ‘til death do you part.”

He had already managed to poke at one of Will’s exposed nerves, and Will could feel his hatred coiling within him. But there was a cruel threat hanging in Dolarhyde’s pause, which became even more palpable as his lips twisted into a wicked snarl.

“Speaking of, how *is* your father?”

Will’s insides froze as his vision tinged red, his hand turning into a fist around his empty solo cup. Francis thought he was kicking at an already wounded dog, but what he was really doing was poking at a sleeping lion. Violent images of how *severely* Will could hurt him, beat him black and blue, break his bones, *spill his blood*, flashed through Will’s mind as he felt the weight of Dolarhyde’s arm around him, and he could feel his blood suddenly starting boiling, thawing the frozen tundra within him.

And truth be told, Will didn’t know what he would have done if Alana hadn’t chosen that moment to step between them.

“Francis.” Her tone was as sharp as a butcher’s knife as she tore his arm away from Will’s shoulders, her eyes burning with the fury that reminded Will of a mother bear as she stepped between them. “*Back off*.”

“D!” Reba, her frail voice cutting through the furious throbbing of his own blood in Will’s ears, came up to them with a visibly concerned expression on her face, her blind hands grasping at thin air until she got a hold of Dolarhyde’s shoulder, shaking him surprisingly vigorously. Her touch seemed to stir something within him, and his gaze softened as he looked down at her. She tugged gently at his sleeve, and he immediately turned to follow her. “Let’s go.”

Francis allowed her to lead him away without much further ado, and as they had made it a safe distance away, she turned over her shoulder to mouth a silent “I’m so sorry!”

But Alana just brushed her off as she turned to Will. He tried to hide his frantic breathing and how badly Dolarhyde had affected him, but not in the way that any of them had expected. And so he evaded her eye contact, even though she sought it quite intently.

“You okay?”

“Yeah, nevermind,” he managed to mumbled out as he rubbed at his temples, his head suddenly spinning.

“Who was that?” Hannibal wondered as he and Margot walked up to them, his eyes burning scorches into Dolarhyde’s back.

“Francis Dolarhyde. Just… A jerk,” Will amended as he put what he hoped was a soothing hand on Hannibal’s chest. The last thing he needed was to wake the raging beast inside of Hannibal right then. “Don’t worry about it.”

Hannibal gave him a hesitant glance, but didn’t get the chance to delve further on it before Margot spoke up.

“Sweet Reba. I never understood what she could have possibly seen in him.”

“Even the worst of men have some good in them,” Hannibal offered as he glanced at Will, but his attention was focused elsewhere.

“You tell me,” he said as he glared at Alana. “It wasn’t I who dated him.”

“Will!” Alana’s eyes expanded in indignation as her tone took on a confrontational armor.

But Will had just turned on his heel and stormed off.

“Will!” Her tone was immediately more exasperated and concerned, and she moved to storm after him. But Hannibal had just calmly put up his hand to stop her, and had then signaled that he would go.

And Alana had let him, staying behind gasping for air she hadn’t realized she had lost, Margot standing beside her, rubbing smooth circles across her back in an attempt to soothe her, unsure of what had just happened.

Hannibal had found him pacing restlessly by the river, a hand rubbing incessantly across his mouth, a tick he had developed while still quite young.

Will had been shaken quite brutally by the way he had reacted to Dolarhyde taunting him.

He had always had morbid thoughts, he had never denied that, but this was the first time he actually considered *acting* on them.

And that had shook him to his bones.

He was scared of himself. Of what he would have done if Alana hadn’t stepped in when she had. *And Alana…*

He hadn’t meant to provoke Alana.

It had all just *slipped out.*

And now it was all a violent whirlwind inside his mind that demolished everything he tried to put in its way.

Hannibal had approached him carefully, mindful not to step into his personal zone. He had clasped his hands behind his back and had just watched him pace for a while, giving him the time and space he needed.

But eventually his curiosity had gotten the better of him, and he asked “How did she die?”

Will froze with his back to him, looking down at his disfigured reflection in the river below. A short lived wonder of how he knew sped through his mind, but it was quickly discarded. Because *of course* he knew.

And the violent chaos that wreaked inside his skull slowly subdued as he felt Hannibal inspecting him, his calm gently conveying onto Will. And he had just had to take a deep breath before he turned around and looked into Hannibal’s eyes, letting it all spill out.

“Car accident,” he said before he swallowed around the heavy lump in his throat. He quickly wondered why it was so very easy for him to open up to Hannibal when he kept everyone else at a good arm’s length, but brushed it off for another time. Now that he had finally opened up there was no going back. “My father was driving drunk. Of course *he* got off without a fucking scratch. She was dead before the first responder arrived.”

He took a shaky breath from the sudden loss of the weight he had carried across his chest for so many years, never truly *putting it into words*. Hannibal pondered on his words for a few moments as the river cursed by behind them, glinting in the setting sun.

“Do you hate him?” He finally asked.

“Yes!”

Will’s first response was instinctive. Of course he hated him. He *had* to hate him. Right?

But hesitating as he gasped for air, his head suddenly spinning again, he changed his mind. “No.”

Frustrated, spinning out of Hannibal’s gaze, he clawed at his itching scalp, as if he could tear it open, reach inside and scoop this raging chaos out, sorting it all out into neat little rows by hand.

“I don’t know,” he finally concluded, helpless, as he felt Hannibal approaching from behind him. “I don’t love him the way a kid should love his parent at least.”

Hannibal was close by him then, close enough to touch, his breath a ghost on Will’s neck.

“Do you want him dead?”

That question startled him. Roughly enough to make everything else fall into the back of his mind, momentarily forgotten as the answer flashed brilliantly clear to him.

He turned around slowly to study Hannibal for a moment before he answered.

“No.” His answer was resolute this time. “It wouldn’t bring mom back. And it would spare him the pain of living with the knowledge that he killed her.”

Hannibal’s lip twitched minutely, and Will smiled fully at him, timid amusement slowly settling over the desolation within him.

“You’re really good at this psychology shit, you know? You ever thought about becoming a psychologist?”

Hannibal smirked at him, his eyes twinkling in the dying sun.

“It’s crossed my mind.”

“Of course it has,” Will muttered as he rolled his eyes. But the evening suddenly felt immensely overwhelming, pressing down on his aching shoulders, and he heaved a heavy sigh. He reached out to touch Hannibal, but stopped midway, not really sure of what made him hesitate. “Let’s go home. I don’t feel like partying tonight.”

Hannibal had only smiled gently before reaching out to grab hold of the hand that Will had left hanging, and his touch had sent a comforting warmth through him.

“I know.”

The back wing of the mill had, for some reason unbeknownst to them, a skylight. And on clear nights, they had the perfect view out into the greater unknown.

Will had quickly learned of Hannibal’s great passion for art, of the way he always carried a pencil and small notebook with him, of the way he sketched small scenes out of their everyday life to keep them close to memory.

And it had been a clear starry night when Hannibal had first mounted him with a brush at the ready.

He had deliberately unbuttoned Will's shirt, button by button, exposing his chest to the chilly evening air, his hands running over the many scars he himself had put there. Will had just looked at him breathlessly, and Hannibal had stared back at him, not a single word exchanged between them.

And then he had brought out the paint.

Will had just lain beneath him as Hannibal’s brush had skittered across his skin, his lower lip being constantly chewed on as he concentrated, his fingers quickly tainting as he searched for that perfect hue that he knew was just out of his reach. Will was mesmerized by watching him work, wanting to reach out and smooth out the small crease between his eyebrows as he knitted them together, but afraid that he’d break something exquisite if he did.

Time ceased to exist between them that night. It had just been the two of them and what they shared that filled up the entire universe.

But then Hannibal had exhaled, sitting back against Will's legs and had admired his work with a lazy smile. Sliding down next to Will, careful not to ruin the still drying painting on his torso, he had entwined their hands.

And with the weight of space and time wearing down on him again as Hannibal played with his oil soiled hand, he had said the first thing that came to his mind to simply get something else to think about.

"Have you heard about the assaults?"

Hannibal stilled beside him as his eyes never wavered from their interlocked hands.

"Yes."

"Kind of unsettling, don't you think? I mean, here, in Wolf Trap."

Will saw a whirlwind of thoughts cursing through Hannibal's mind as he still refused to look up at him, until he finally settled on asking "Are you frightened?"

Will settled back against the armrest of the old floral couch as he pondered over the question. And he was surprised by his own answer.

"No. I guess I'm… Curious. Who it is. What they *want*. Why *here*, of all places."

Hannibal quirked an amused eyebrow as he finally looked up at him.

"You want to *meet* it?"

"No," he chuckled as he slowly stroked his thumb across Hannibal's knuckles. "I wouldn't want to push my luck *that* far. I'm just…" He paused as he considered his words, Hannibal watching him intently. "*Curious*."

Hannibal just gazed at him for a while then, the stars twinkling above them reflecting in his pupils.

"You're beautiful Will."

And Will could only press his face into Hannibal's hair, hugging him closer, never quite sure how to answer such a statement.

The sun was a mirage behind the ceiling of trees above them, the stream gurgling softly by their feet. Hannibal had insisted on Will teaching him how to fish, and so there they were, Hannibal sitting in between Will's legs, the most basal fishing rod Will had been able to find in hand. The riverbank where they had currently found themselves setting camp at was a worthless fishing spot, if any fish at all occupied that part of the river, but Will could tell that

Hannibal didn't really care. He was content in just sitting with Will's arm around him, telling him when and how to pull on the nylon line.

Alana and Margot sat a few feet away from the riverbank, tossing the few grapes that was left of their picking at each other, mumbling triumphantly whenever one was caught by their teeth. Their gentle giggles bounced in between the trees along with the mockingbird chirps.

And Will was at peace.

They had fallen into a pleasant routine, that morning not the first when the girls had woken them up with a wicker basket full of bread, cheese and fruit. It was far from the first day he and Hannibal had spent in a silent tranquility, words redundant between them as they simply enjoyed drinking in the other's presence.

The days had started blurring into one another, and along with them, time itself.

And Will was grateful for his mindless oblivion.

But the unmistakable sound of a shutter closing shook him out of his reverie, and he turned around just in time to catch Alana lowering her camera. Sighing helplessly, he contorted his face into his best puppy dog stare, a look at least Hannibal was incapable of saying no to.

"Alana, please, *no*," he pleaded as the photo slowly started printing.

"You're adorable, you know that?" She just smirked as she plucked the photo out of the camera, shaking it softly as she waited for it to develop, and Will groaned as he buried his face in Hannibal's back, while he just chuckled goodheartedly.

"I'll pose!" Margot immediately offered, instantly striking a ridiculous pose which Alana snapped a shot of while laughing softly, bending over to kiss her while the photo printed. Hannibal leaned further into Will's embrace, his heartbeat beating steady against his own, and trailed his lips along Will's bare arm.

"Sometimes I wonder if I'm dreaming," he suddenly murmured against Will's skin, and he tilted his head to get a better view of him. "I just feel like this all must be a dream. You." His eyes flicked up to meet Will's, and the adoration in them would have been smothering if he wasn't already so used to it. "All of you. This place. It's too good to be true. It *must* be a dream." A heavy wistfulness had settled in his voice then, and he had averted his eyes to inspect the glimmering river again. "And I don't want it to end."

Time and space came crashing and tumbling down on Will again, as it had a tendency to do whenever it slipped through his carefully assembled forts in a vain attempt to keep them out, and he squeezed his eyes shut as he pressed his face into Hannibal's shoulder.

It was already approaching the end of July.

But he shook his head resolutely as his lips trailed up their familiar path along Hannibal's neck.

“No,” he declared determinedly against Hannibal’s cheek, securing his grip of him, as if he could keep him forever if he just believed in it hard enough. “You’re not dreaming. We’re here. Right now. You and I. Okay?”

Hannibal turned his head to meet his gaze again, his eyes glistening dangerously, but he took a shaky breath before smiling brightly.

“Yeah.”

“And you need to pull on your line,” Will managed to chuckle through the thick and suffocating blanket that had settled heavy over his chest, and Hannibal laughed with him as he settled more snugly against his chest.

They all sat silently then, listening to the ripple of the river and twittering of the birds, falling into a peaceful tranquility together.

All up until Alana had looked up from the newspaper she had been skimming, and disturbed it.

“Have you heard about the attacks? It’s getting worse, they haven't even found Mr…”

“Alana, *please*,” Will pleaded again, but without of the lighthearted teasing from before, fatigue grating heavy on his shoulders.

“I’ll shut up!” Raising her hands above her head in surrender, she eyed him with a wary expression. “Jesus.”

Their tranquility was jaded after that, a strained tension creeping in between them. But Will closed his eyes from the outside world, shut off his senses to any impressions that couldn’t be traced back to the entity he held in his arms, and found his serenity in Hannibal’s presence.

“Teach me.”

The request had come one late evening while Will had been watching Hannibal paint, the moon just a sliver above them.

“What?” The question had broken his peaceful concentration, and Hannibal looked up at him with a confused expression.

“Teach me how to paint,” Will elaborated as he crawled out of the couch, kneeling next to Hannibal on the floor, more painting utensils than Will could name lying scattered in front of them. “I want to know what it feels like.”

Hannibal was still staring at him in shock, his mouth hanging open somewhat, and Will just shrugged timidly. But then Hannibal’s lips had split into an euphoric grin.

“Okay.”

It had been clumsy and messy and even downright ugly, but Hannibal had been patient and encouraging, and Will, even to his own surprise, had enjoyed himself. Because even though he was useless at it, he understood why Hannibal loved it so.

There was a freedom in it, a *power* to it, of the way an idea transferred from your mind through the brush onto the canvas, of crafting something so utterly extraordinary with your own bare hands.

But Will was never to become the next Picasso, as he could barely keep within the canvas Hannibal had provided him with, the brush about as swift as bedrock in his hands.

“This is a mess,” Will mumbled as he inspected his own paint stained hands, the chaotic clutter on his canvas.

“It’s beautiful,” Hannibal chuckled as he inspected it all, and the worst part was, Will knew he was being sincere.

Overcome with affection, he grabbed hold of his poor instructor having been laden with such an inadequate apprentice, determined to show just how grateful he was for all the hard but imperceptible work he spent his precious time on, sticky fingers twisting into his silky hair.

But Hannibal had been right.

It had been beautiful.

It was an overcast afternoon, which very much felt like the first of the entire summer, when he had walked into the sawmill, and found it empty.

It was odd enough that Hannibal was nowhere to be found, stranger still that he wasn’t waiting for Will with open arms, which he usually always was.

“Hannibal?”

He made his way through the abandoned building, thunder crackling outside as he stepped between the many belongings they had acquired over time scattered all over the floor, the upturned first aid kid from when Margot had accidentally knocked Hannibal in the nose so hard he started bleeding, the gramophone Hannibal had dragged there as he had insisted that they would listen to music the proper way, the many books they made their way through together that summer. Hannibal’s painting equipment, Will’s tools for when he occasionally tinkered with one of his dad’s boat motors, the photographs Alana had managed to assemble over the course of the summer lying haphazardly in an unfinished album. And he was suddenly hit with the realization of how much they had built together there. They had made a life for themselves.

And an irrational fear that Hannibal had finally walked away from it all dug its vicious claws into Will, and his heart suddenly sped up to a frantic beating as he spun around under the skylight in disbelief.

But that couldn't be. Hannibal wasn't set to leave for another good few weeks. And he wouldn't just leave Will hanging.

Would he?

"Hannibal!"

Not knowing what else to do, he tore his way down to the basement, a damp and cold cavity they hadn't payed much attention to, all but tumbling down the rickety stairs, his shoulder brushing by the concrete walls as he came to an abrupt halt once down in the semi cylinder shaped room, that he absentmindedly registered mush have served as a bomb shelter once upon a time.

Because there he was.

And Will breathed a sigh of relief, letting go of the tension that had unintentionally gathered in his shoulders, berating himself for ever allowing himself to doubt him.

But as Hannibal turned around to face him, it was with trembling hands and a frightened look in usually so solid amber eyes.

And with blood up to his elbows and a corpse by his feet.

Will's gut dropped to the floor as he immediately pieced everything together.

"You're *it*."

"Will…" His name came out as a broken sob, Hannibal's voice urgent and terrified all at once, and his blood soaked hands reached out as if to touch him.

"You're the robber. The assailant." Will backed away from his reach, but his own voice was void of any emotion.

His insides felt like one big echo.

As if his whole life had been violently jerked from his so tender grasp on it.

"The one who's been causing all the trouble."

"Will, if you'd just…"

But Will would never have found out what Hannibal had wanted to say, even if he had stayed around long enough for Hannibal to find his voice again.

The corroding door falling off its hinges behind him as he had slammed it shut.

Chapter End Notes

I'm wishing you all very happy holidays by a cliffhanger! ~~But if we're being fair, we as a fandom should be used to that by now.~~ I actually have the final chapter completed, but not edited. And I take the holidays *very* seriously, so I'm going to be spending the next few days with my longed for family and stuffing my face with ham, meatballs and rice pudding, drowning myself in glögg and hot chocolate. But it will hopefully be up before new year!

But AlanaXDolarhyde! There's a crackship for ya.

No seriously, I'm just trying to make this as much as a teenage soap opera as possible, and that was one of the many ways to do that.

Also, in hindsight, it might have been more appropriate to put Mason in Dolarhyde's role... But nyeeeh, it will all make more sense next chapter, I promise.

We rattle this town, we rattle this scene

Chapter Notes

I rip holes in my shirt
There's mud on my shoes, there's sun on my skin
I am brand new
We shout at the cops, we howl at the moon
Just a matter of time
Don't you get it?
We are the kids that you never can kill
- **We are the kids**, Walk the Moon

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Hannibal found him down by the river.

But this time he hadn't been pacing.

He had stood motionless staring down at the ripples the slowly trickling raindrops caused in the unusually still stream, listening to the quiet in his own mind.

The calm before the storm.

The revelation had come suddenly and ruthlessly, shaking the very foundations of his life. But it hadn't been surprising.

Somewhere deep down he had somehow always known.

He had felt rather than heard Hannibal approaching, his footsteps light and soundless. *The steps of a killer*.

Murderer.

Monster.

"What *are* you?"

Turning around as the droplets turned heavier above them, clinging to Will's dark curls and slipping off of Hannibal's silky strands, he was met with the same frightful look he had seen in the basement of the sawmill, if only even wilder and more desperate. Hannibal's lips had been parted in a soundless pant as raindrops slid down his high cheekbones.

There was a long silence as the thunder struck above them again.

“I don’t know,” he finally said, working around the crack in his voice.

And Will believed him.

Hannibal had never been capable of lying to him, Will immediately seeing through all of his carefully crafted words meant to conceal. And it was that knowledge he seemed to deliberate as his brows knit together, the small crease emerging between them.

And Will had to fight down the foolish desire to reach out and smooth it out.

“I’ve eaten some of them.”

The confession made Will jerk, but he found himself incapable of reacting more strongly. *Somehow he had always known.*

But the small reaction still caused a frantic panic in Hannibal’s rust colored eyes, his long, blood covered fingers rising to grasp at damp air, before thinking better of it. His hands dropped to his sides as he inhaled sharply, his eyes solidifying again as his body language contracted, becoming the epitome of composure and control as he inspected Will.

With tears still rising in his eyes.

“Do you want to kill me?”

And Will had tried to find it in him, and tried his very hardest, but still the answer was as unsurprising as the revelation of what Hannibal really was.

“No.”

Hannibal’s armor had momentarily slipped then, Will not entirely sure he had expected an answer at all, and especially not that one. But his guards was quickly up again as he slowly started approaching him, a predator on the prowl.

But Will was uncertain of just what kind of prey he himself was.

“I *do* love you.”

The sincerity rang clear in Will’s ears, vibrating through his spine, settling deep in his gut, the verity of that statement never having wavered.

“I know.”

“I would *never* hurt you.”

“I know.”

Hannibal come to a halt in front of him then, just out of his reach, the electricity between them having nothing to do with the lightning storm above them. But he faltered a little in his prowl, his shoulders falling slightly as he seemed to be searching for some kind of reaction in Will’s eyes, and he almost looked lost when he was left empty handed.

“So what do we do now?”

His question was as a frail whisper, barely audible. And he could have sworn he flinched as Will inhaled sharply, desperate to contain the enigmatic thunderstorm that had suddenly rolled over his own mind, tears pressing into his eyes as well.

“I don’t know.”

“*Mīļš!*”

His mother had greeted him with pleasant surprise, that night the first night in weeks that he had spent together with her and his father in the snug little cabin they had rented on the outskirts of town.

But he had quickly evaded her, stumbling up the solid wooden stairs up to his bedroom before she could get a good look at his bloodstained shirt, resolutely shutting the door behind him. She didn’t follow him, his parents never having been the invading kind, always knowing when he needed time for himself.

They were kind of great that way.

He had staggered over to the sink in his bathroom, running the water close to scalding hot, and had then started to scrub his face vigorously.

He *didn’t* know what he was.

And that ignorance scared him.

He had always been up to petty crimes back home, stealing candy from the local grocer, slashing the tires of the neighbors car, and he had been able to file it away as kleptomania and childish antics, even though it had never quite sat very well with him. He had always had an aggressive vein, a tendency to turn hostile when provoked. But who wasn’t, to some degree?

But the murders had developed recently, in Wolf Trap.

He had always been driven by curiosity, a deep rooted *need* to know exactly how the world they all occupied so unquestionably worked. And when old Georgie had provoked him, the knife he had previously only carried to intimidate sliding oh so tenderly into the soft flesh of his belly, scarlet blood flooding the floor and the old man stumbling back, his intestines sliding out of the long gash in his stomach, slipping in between his stiff old fingers, Hannibal had wondered.

And then that wonder had turned too strong, one thing had led to the other, and then there he had stood, panting as he furiously tried to scrub the blood from his cuticles.

He refused to feel shame over his actions though, and he wouldn’t have taken any of it back if he had had the chance to.

He didn’t know *what* he was. But he *was* what he was.

And he couldn't explain or change it any more than he could explain or change the way he felt for Will.

Suddenly sagging against the sink, tender scrubbed fingertips digging into the ivory porcelain, he tried to even his breathing as he thought back on the confrontation he had just gotten back from.

Will had stormed away from him again after declaring his incapability to decide what to do about their peculiar situation, mumbling something about "needing time" as he had clutched at his head, so viciously Hannibal had feared he would draw blood. But Hannibal had let him leave then, standing by as he watched him stumble up the hill again as the storm fell down heavier between them.

Because he had found himself strangely content in leaving his fate in Will's hands. It took the burden of deciding that himself off his shoulders, and there was no other's judgement he trusted more than Will's.

But the image of his terrified expression as he had first stumbled upon him in the mill etched itself onto his retina, and a silent teardrop fell down into the swirling pink water in the sink. Followed by another, and another and another…

And he didn't know which loss he was weeping over.

Will.

Or his own happiness.

But silently collecting whatever was left of him to collect, he dragged himself over to bed, his shirt still damp and his eyes still burning with tears as he stared up at the pale ceiling, not knowing what else to do without Will's steady heartbeat by his side.

And it felt like he had just tucked the heavy comforter up to his chin as his mother had called for him the next morning.

"Hannibal! William is here!"

"Will. *Just* Will, Mrs. Lecter," he explained as he tried not to shuffle uncomfortably under her soft gaze.

He had been standing in the small corridor just inside the backdoor of the Lecter's summer cabin. It was a rustic construction, all naked wood panels and floor to ceiling windows, the sparse but homely decorated space bathing in the soft morning light.

Will had never been inside the small cabin before, not because he was unwelcomed, but simply because he had never seen the necessity of it. He and Hannibal had been so safely tucked away in their sawmill, so determined not to let their summer run them by, only to have it slip through their fingers instead.

He had never even spoken to Mrs. Lecter before.

“Of course, dear,” she said as she smiled warmly at him, her accent a bit heavier but just as melodious as Hannibal’s. She had dimples and a round and plump face, and Will figured Hannibal must have gotten all of his sharp features from his father. But her eyes glowed like copper in the gentle morning sun, and they held the same stormy verve as her son’s.

But Will’s attention was torn from the small woman as heavy footfalls sounded above them, naked feet skidding across wooden floorboards, Hannibal all but tumbling down the staircase, coming to an abrupt halt halfway down as his eyes landed on Will, his breath coming short.

And Will couldn’t help the small smile that tugged at his lips.

His hair was tousled and standing up in all directions, he was wearing the same, crumbled, shirt he had worn yesterday, the bloodstains sufficiently washed out by the rain he had trudged through that they could pass as paint stains, and there were dark circles under his confused eyes.

He was a *mess*.

A beautiful*, gorgeous* mess.

And Mrs. Lecter had quickly vanished from his vision, as it narrowed until Hannibal was all that he saw.

Will didn’t know for how long they had just stared at each other, it could easily have been a small eternity, until Mrs. Lecter cleared her throat.

“Well… I’ll just leave you boys to it then.”

And she had smiled as she had walked into the bright living room, carefully closing the door behind her, but neither Will nor Hannibal had noticed.

“Will, I…” Hannibal, always so composed, always so eloquent, stumbled over his words as his hand raised as if to reach out and touch him, but curled into a shaking fist as he inhaled sharply, uncertainty clear in his usually so steady eyes. Will saw the conflict that raged within him, the misery that tore at him, the throes he must have struggled with throughout the night. And although a small part of him felt like he deserved it, he decided to spare him the anguish.

“Teach me.”

Hannibal came to a halt, Will’s request rattling him enough to cease his inner torment, and just stared at him with a funny look.

“What?”

“Teach me how to kill.”

The words were out of Will’s mouth before he had the time to contemplate them. He had already made his mind up, and it was too late to back out now.

He didn't remember much from the night before, it having ended on the bottom of one of his dad's old whiskey bottles which still throbbed roughly at the back of his head. But what he *did* remember, was that he had come to the conclusion that he loved Hannibal.

He loved Hannibal more immensely than he could even begin to put into words. He loved Hannibal completely and utterly, and with an acute ache in his chest whenever they were apart. He wanted to be a part of Hannibal's life, a part of his world, with all what that meant.

Homicide and all.

And as he had forced himself to be honest with himself, it wasn't really that big of a step. He had been ready to kill Dolarhyde that late June night. He had had to restrain himself from hurting his father on multiple of occasion when he had stirred quarrels. He had spent countless of nights fantasizing about how to best slice and dice his old childhood tormentor Randall Tier, skin and gut him the way he would a fish, sever his tender flesh from his rotten bones and carving out his depraved heart from his distorted chest. Prepare him. Process him.

Eat him.

He had realize that the seed of this savagery had always been planted within him, slowly maturing in his chest and in his mind, but never sprouting, only just simmering underneath the surface. And it had taken Hannibal's loving hands for it to bloom into all its beauty.

And he was intent to finally act on it as he stared at Hannibal, his mouth gaping open as he stared back.

"I want to know what it feels like."

Hannibal inhaled again, sharply, shakily, and tears welled in his eyes as his jaw quivered in disbelief.

"Will?"

"I want you to teach me how to kill Hannibal."

That was when Hannibal all but flung himself at him.

He kissed him fiercely, Will staggering into the wall behind him by the force of it, banging his already pounding head into the wooden panel. And he had just started to find his feet when Hannibal suddenly broke the kiss, pressing butterfly light pecks all across his face instead, murmuring softly into his skin.

"How did I ever come across you? What did I do for the universe to grace me with your presence…"

"Don't you start talking about fate and shit now," Will said as he had to suppress the giddy laugh that threatened to rise in his chest, grinning as he had to grab a hold of Hannibal's face and hold it steady in front of him in order to breathe properly. "We got a murder to commit."

His whisper ignited the sparks between them as he rested his forehead against Hannibal's, and it took all of his self-control not to kiss him again.

And Hannibal still seemed to be the verge of tears as he smiled in rapture.

Hannibal introduced him to the art of killing.

And it was even more exquisite than he had ever imagined.

In some ways, it was a lot like painting. The way the blood poured from the victim, the way it could be used to create something stunning. The power that Will was suddenly made very aware of he held in his own two hands, the power to balance life and death at his very own fingertips. The liberation of his own mind, the freedom of finally gracing the world with his atrocious designs.

And this time he wasn't a completely futile apprentice.

He was actually quite the opposite.

And as Hannibal had looked at him, panting slightly from the strife, blood dripping from his fingers down to the mutilated carcass between them, his eyes brimming with adoration and tears, he had whispered; "It's beautiful."

If Hannibal had rattled the town, together they shook it to its core.

The whole community quivered with fear of them, and it was a sensation Will had never known he had wanted to experience. The local police department were out of their wits, grasping at thin air, not even knowing where to start, finally calling for a curfew, urging people to not step outside without company, to not stray outside the town limit. The townspeople were eager to listen to them, terrified and desperate for any sense of security.

And both Will and Hannibal delighted in all of their foolishness.

Will had thought it would have been more troublesome to adjust to his new identity as an outlaw, but he had fallen into it with surprising ease. But he had realized that he had waited for this change his entire life. Waited for Hannibal to commence his metamorphosis. It had even gone so far as his father commenting on how he was behaving differently.

More confidently.

He *was* more comfortable in his own skin, finally accepting the part of him that he had tried to suppress for far too long. The more problematic part was how he was to adapt this new shift in regards to the people around him.

Hannibal had been part of his becoming, had been the reason behind it, so he hadn't been the problem. Everyone else was.

He didn't know how to behave around his father, with this sudden power shift within himself, and it manifesting as a power shift between the two of them. Will was more confident with himself, and that made his father nervous, and they had soon switched places, his father being the one tip-toeing around their house so as to stay out of Will's acknowledgement.

He had trouble looking Alana in the eyes as she confided her fright over the murders, having to force himself to rub soothing circles across her back as she had suddenly lunged at him, sobbing violently against his chest as he didn't know what else to do.

And it had all culminated during the first tentative steps of august when they had been sitting down by the river again, a blanket wrapped tightly around Margot's shoulders, as if it could shield her from all the horrors that wreaked around her. Her eyes were tracked on the stream below them, a nail being absentmindedly chewed on as Alana's head rested in her lap.

It had been a grey day, free from rain but feeling as if the sun had abandoned them to never return. The river had gargled beside them, the colder winds reminding them of the approaching fall, and melancholy hung heavy between them. They had gotten strict orders not to venture into the woods, but none of them had ever been inclined to follow them. And Will figured that the girls felt safe in their presence, which he was incapable of appreciating the wicked irony of.

With every day that passed, he felt the distance between his old and new life growing. And he felt more and more incapable of embracing his future with Hannibal as he kept grasping on to the thin strands of his past.

And that had been the hardest part of all.

"Reba's left town," Margot finally announced, her voice sounding a million miles away as she didn't tear her eyes away from the river. "Didn't tell anyone where she was going. She's convinced Francis' behind the murders."

"So's Mr. Crawford," Alana said as she gingerly sat up, wincing as if the movement strained her. "He's been detained."

Will could tell she didn't share Mr. Crawfords conviction, and it hit him like a blow to the gut as Margot moved to embrace her. It *did* pain him to see his friends so crestfallen, and he didn't know how much longer he would be able to stand it. And he was desperate to make it stop.

Hannibal hugged him tighter, as if he could sense what was about to come. But he looked just as surprised as Alana and Margot at the words that actually came out of Will's mouth.

"We need a party."

They had all soon seen the ingenuity in Will's proposition though.

The prospect of another festivity had immediately raised the spirits of Wolf Trap's youth. It gave them something else to think about, something to look forward to instead of just waiting

for when the next murder would occur. And Will had offered the sawmill for the occasion, feeling like it was the least he could do after all the dread he had put them all through.

Alana and Margot found some of their joviality again as they had helped decorate the mill, fairy lights and flower petals in sight no matter where you turned. Jack had brought the drums, Bella both paint and glitter, Frederick his surly mood and Freddie her too buoyant personality.

And it had been a killer.

The mill had been filled with laughter and life in the way that only Wolf Trap's juvenility could. Beverly had somehow managed to pull both Price and Zeller into a Macarena, Miriam had somehow scrambled up the mezzanine and tried to start a game of *Marco Polo*, almost the entire party freezing in their tracks to shout at her to get down before she hurt herself, and Abel had been the one to win the beer chugging competition this time, shamelessly rubbing his victory in Jack's face before turning on his heel to throw up.

All despite the disheartening news that Dolarhyde had been released earlier that day due to insufficient evidence to arrest him.

But when Wolf Trap decided to celebrate, it never did it half-assedly.

And Will had been participating instead of observing.

For the first time that any of them could remember, Will had been the one to initiate conversations. He had been standing upright and hadn't shied away when people had approached him. He had taken up his rightful place.

And he had danced with Hannibal until his breath had given way, falling into his arms with a wheezing laugh, Hannibal peppering his face with riant kisses.

And the longer the night went on, the more the already crumbling building fell apart. It hadn't been intentional from their guest's part, no one had deliberately set out to ruin their home. It was simply the nature of the night, glitter filling in the cracks in the walls, high heels and sneakers stepping over broken window glass, the back wing being sealed off as the first rafters started falling from the ceiling.

But Will and Hannibal wasn't grieving their beloved mill.

Because it had never been meant to last that party.

It was time for it to collapse.

And as the sun had just set behind the horizon, the heavier dusks of the approaching autumn creating long shadows in between the trees, Hannibal had pulled him outside. Stealing a chaste kiss, he had bumped Will's forehead with his own before he had smiled mischievously.

"Come with me."

Grabbing hold of Will’s hand, he had made his way across the woods back to Will’s old pickup truck, Will having to run to keep up with him.

“Where are we going?” He asked in between pants as Hannibal fished out his car keys and grinned at him.

“You’ll see.”

And taking his place behind the wheel, Will could only grin along with him as he took the passenger seat. Hannibal looked over at him as he revved the motor, smiling as he interlaced their fingers, and then they hurtled out of the forest into the night.

The evening air was cool against his neck and the vivid blood hot on his hands.

The dismembered body of Dolarhyde laid between them, both of them panting, his scattered blood adorning their faces like paint, drenching their clothes. The stars were just discernible above them, the full moon illuminating them along with the streetlights just behind them, the town’s bustling slowly settling before the curfew.

And Hannibal’s fingernails dug into the back of his neck, pulling him in for a yearning kiss, pressing him close, close, closer still, and the tip of Will’s sneakers bumped into Dolarhyde, soaking in his blood, his vision spinning when they finally pulled apart, Hannibal gasping for air as his amber eyes burned into Will’s.

“You are much too vibrant for a small town life.”

“Well,” he murmured while he smiled euphorically, tilting his head up for another kiss as he tugged at Hannibal’s blood stained shirt. “Why don’t you take me away from here?”

Chapter End Notes

Well, here is the conclusion of this train wreck!

It's approaching new years, and I've fallen into my evaluation phase. And I just... *Hannibal* has been such a great part of the latter half of this year, and I'm just so grateful to this incredible fandom, and this amazing show. It's been a steady pillar to cling on to while my whole life has shifted under my feet. So this is to all of you! All of you who made this show not only a media to appreciate, but an entirely unique experience in its own right.

I love you all.

This project has also been in the works for about six months, so it feels good to end the year with it.

I promised you all a happy ending. This is happy-ish? Happy in the sense of Murder Husbands Happy?? I hope I didn't leave the ending *too* open and left you all with a thousand questions, because they're... They're gonna be okay. I left *them* with a happy ending.

And I'm not implying that it was Will and his unconscious need to impress him that turned Hannibal into a murderer... No wait, that's exactly what I'm implying.

I feel like I have violated WtM's repertoire. It was never meant to imply cannibalism, just carefree joviality. But if you listen lazily, it *does* sound like Nick is singing *There's blood on my shoes*, so...

And seeing how the soundtrack was a very vital part while writing this, I actually published its playlist! And now you can all know what indie rock trash I am.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!